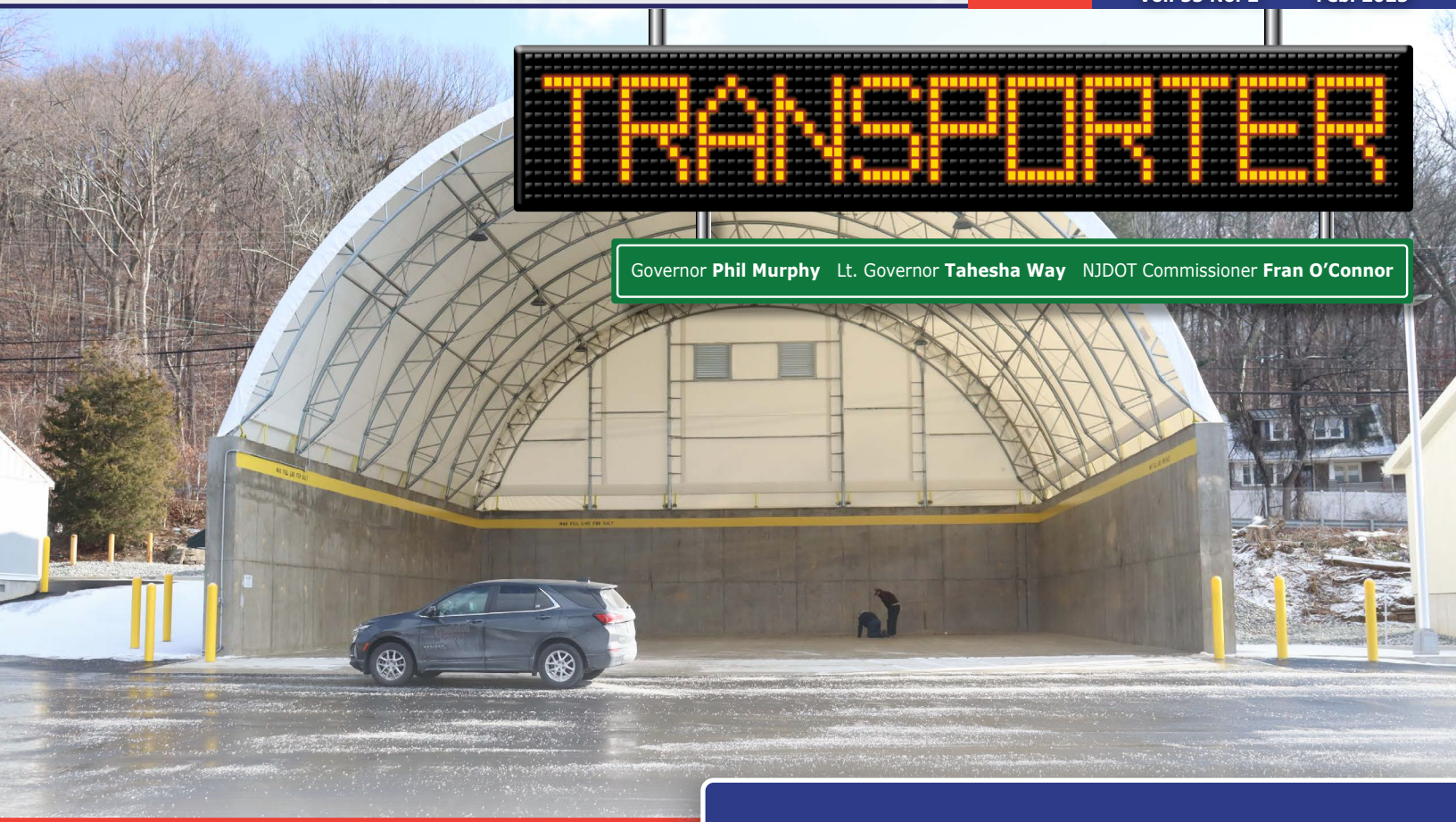
Vol. 55 No. 2 Feb. 2025

TRANSPORTER

Governor **Phil Murphy** Lt. Governor **Tahesha Way** NJDOT Commissioner **Fran O'Connor**



Renovated Hackettstown Yard is Ready to A-salt Winter Roads

By Howard Gensler

NJDOT's Hackettstown Yard sits on a hill between Route 46 eastbound and westbound. The entrance is on the upslope of a westbound exit, and if you miss it, you can drive around in circles. The Hackettstown Yard is a key location for the North Region, where the air is colder and the snowfall greater than in balmy Ewing, and the Yard is responsible for more than 180 lane miles over eight townships: Columbia, Netcong, Stanhope, Roxbury, Byram, Peapack/ Gladstone, the Allamuchy rest area, and of course, Hackettstown.

The Yard is now nearing the completion of a multi-million-dollar renovation that added a new salt dome and new garage bays. At capacity, the new structure will hold 1,500 tons of salt. That's three million pounds of salt.

IN THIS EDITION

Meet Eric Powers
Page 3

Kindness Korner - Email Etiquette
Page 4

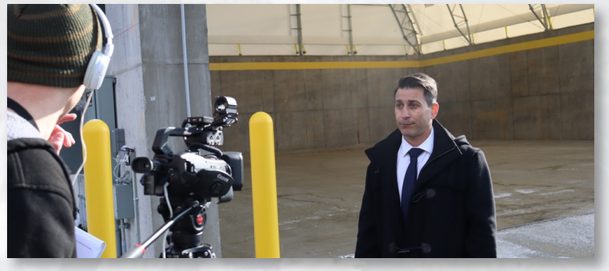
News & Notes
Pages 5-16

That salt will be used to improve road traction on Routes 46, 206, 183, 163 and I-80, according to Danielle Roman, Director of North Region Operations. In addition to salt and other road surfacing needs, the Yard will also be used to store plow parts and repair plows. "It's only manned when working on plow parts, loading salt and being used for winter operations," Roman said.

Continued on page 2

If you're going to build a structure to hold 1,500 tons of salt, what do you need besides concrete, steel and heavy-duty tenting? The most important thing is engineers, people who didn't fall asleep in their STEM classes. The structure needs to be able to contain the salt and also ensure the salt doesn't leach into the ground.

Pour a pound of salt onto a flat service and even though you try to keep the powder in a contained area, it spreads. Now, do that three million more times. Without the proper floor materials and wall support, you're going to have a salt avalanche down the Hackettstown hills.



Andrew Zeleznock, NJDOT's Deputy Director of Support Services, explained that the Hackettstown Yard was originally the property of NJ Transit, but NJDOT took it over around 25 years ago. Its purpose is to serve as a midpoint between the Netcong and Port Colden Yards. The Yard was renovated this past year because "Everything was outdated. The new salt tent will be a little easier to maintain, easier for accessibility."

Chris Sagliocco has been with NJDOT for a decade and is now a principal engineer, one of the people responsible for making sure renovations are safe and serve their intended purpose. "We have a few other yards in the area," Sagliocco said, "and when their trucks come out, they come here and refuel, restock on salt and calcium and head back out on the road." Sagliocco has so far been involved with the building, or rebuilding, of 15 to 20 yards. "They can be anywhere from all the way up in High Point to all the way down in Cape May." (If you want to win at bar trivia, NJDOT has 66 yards statewide.)

When asked what's the biggest challenge of building in such a desolate, hilly area, Zeleznock said, "Coordination. And keeping things within budget."

For more information on the Hackettstown Yard Renovations, watch NJDOT's video.

TRANSPORTER

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Meet the Executive Leadership Team

Profile #4

Eric Powers NJDOT

Assistant Commissioner of Statewide Planning, Safety, and Capital Investment

Years of Service:
23 Years at NJDOT

First Position at NJDOT:
NJDOT's First Freight Planner

What is your favorite part about working for NJDOT?
We do work that matters alongside people who care. Everyone relies on the transportation system in some way every day. It is great to be part of an organization that leans into challenges and finds ways to succeed.

What is your goal or primary focus as Assistant Commissioner?
My focus is to create empowered teams and space for the people around me to grow and achieve.

What's your favorite thing about New Jersey?
New Jersey offers a little bit of everything – urban centers, farmland, beaches, bike trails. So much is so close.

What's a hobby or interest you have that might surprise people?
I create art out of scrap, found, and repurposed metal. I also roast my own coffee beans.

What's your favorite way to unwind after a busy week?
I find it therapeutic to get some dirt under my fingernails making or fixing something- normally accompanied by listening to loudish metal, punk, and ska music.

Over the next few months, you will have an opportunity to get to know our Senior Staff in this continuing feature of the *Transporter*

Kindness Korner - Email Etiquette

By Nick DeJohn

Hi Frasier,

I'm following up on my previous message regarding the Route 38 project. With the submission date in just two days, we have yet to receive the initial design estimates from your team. If there are any issues or you're unavailable to proceed, please let us know as soon as possible so we can adjust our timeline or resources as needed.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Niles

Niles sends another email to Frasier, adding to the growing list of unanswered dispatches this week. Frustration builds as the deadline for the first major proposal of the New Year rapidly approaches, but his inbox remains empty. Is Frasier deliberately overlooking this assignment, perhaps considering it less urgent? Is he too busy with other commitments and doesn't realize he's involved? Is he sick? Niles hopes not, as he has no time to buy a get-well card.

Reaching his breaking point, Niles marches to Martin's office, knocks on the door frame, and firmly states, "Frasier hasn't been responding to anything. I don't know what's up, but we have to move forward, or we're screwed."

"Okay, he's out," Martin replies matter-of-factly. "Bring Roz on board."

Niles nods. "I would be happy to, but I know she's extremely busy with other work. If Fraiser had his out-of-office email reply on, designating Roz as his point person, she would be able to delegate this work or better plan her schedule to accommodate a task this large; and we wouldn't be dangerously close to deadline."

Meanwhile, on the beaches of Cancun, Frasier stirs from a nap and surveys the tropical paradise around him. After a moment of reflection, Daphne, sitting by his side, looks up at him.

"What's wrong?" she asks.

"Hmmm… I think I forgot to set my out-of-office reply," Frasier admits.

They both ponder this oversight briefly before Frasier leans back in his chair and closes his eyes.

"I'm sure it'll be fine."

Unfortunately, it was not.

Wondering what to include in your out-of-office reply? Here's some basic information that will help your co-workers while you're out:

- The Start and End Dates of Your Leave
- The Date You Are Expecting to Return to the Office
- The Best Person to Contact While You're Away
- How to Contact Them (both phone and email, if possible)

Thank you for contacting the NJDOT Communications Office. I will be out of the office from Monday, February 24 through Friday, February 28, with limited access to email, and will be returning to the office on Monday, March 3. If you need immediate assistance, please contact:

Roz Doyle, Public Information Officer
Email: roz.doyle@dot.nj.gov
Desk: (609) 609-6099

NJDOT Communications Office, General Contact Information
Email: dot.communicationsoffice@dot.nj.gov
Phone: 609.963.1975

Have a great day!
Fraiser

News & Notes

News & Notes is a collection of employee awards, retirements, service anniversaries and other shareable and NJDOT pride-producing news.

Governor's State of the State: "We're from Jersey, Baby!"

By Lizzy Galamba

In case you missed it, Governor Phil Murphy delivered his annual State of the State Address on Tuesday, January 14 – the second-to-last State of the State he will ever deliver. Here's what he had to say about transportation in New Jersey:

"And, on the topic of helping New Jerseyans access new economic opportunities, let us remember that we all rely on the same literal framework to get us where we need to go: our infrastructure," Governor Murphy said. "Under our Administration, New Jersey has embarked on a historic undertaking to rebuild and reimagine our entire transportation system."

"This year, Commissioner Fran O'Connor and I are going to work with all of you to make New Jersey's roads safer for drivers, pedestrians, and everyone who calls the Garden State home," Governor Murphy said. Commissioner O'Connor was the only commissioner named in the Governor's address. "As part of this effort, by the end of this year, we are going to overhaul our state's ten most dangerous intersections to keep our families safe and to help prevent avoidable tragedies."

By the end of 2025, NJDOT will have spent approximately one million dollars (about $100,000 per intersection) to make safety improvements at Route 129 and Lalor Street in Trenton, Route 129 and Cass Street in Trenton, Route 1 and North Avenue in Elizabeth, Route 1 and East Jersey Street in Elizabeth, Route 1 and East Grand Street in Elizabeth, Route 9 and Ferry Road in Old Bridge, Route 27 and Franklin Boulevard in Franklin, Route 27 and Irving Street in Franklin, Route 27 and Hagel Avenue in Roselle, Route 9 and Spring Valley Road in Old Bridge.

Improvements will include the installation of Red Light Extension, also known as the "Jersey Extension," and Passive Pedestrian Detection systems, as well as Leading Pedestrian Interval technology, which has already been installed on Route 129 in Trenton and on Route 1 in Elizabeth. For more information on these technologies, please see "Innovative Intersections" on page four of the January 2025 issue of the Transporter.

Continued on page 6

Additional safety improvements will be made along Route 129 in Trenton. This spring, NJDOT plans to restripe the crosswalks at the three intersections to widen them, which will provide more visibility and a larger buffer zone, and as part of a capital project, the Department will improve pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle safety, mobility accessibility and reliability along a 1.4-mile stretch of Route 129 from Route 29 to Route 1.

The goal of this project is to reduce vehicle speeds through the corridor, specifically targeting the Lalor Street/CR 650, Cass Street, and Hamilton Avenue/ CR 606 intersections. To slow traffic, the project includes advance warning signs, speed reduction signs, pavement markings, transverse rumble stripes, and geometric changes to the roadway. Concept Development for this Capital Program project is nearing completion with Preliminary Engineering anticipated to begin in late summer or early fall 2025. Construction is expected to begin in 2029.

But, as we have come to know, the Department's hard work to create and deploy innovative technologies, to redesign and reengineer the roadway cannot be successful without the cooperation of motorists. If we are working toward Getting to Zero, we must target driver behavior – a concept the Department has continued to develop since the the launch of Commissioner O'Connor's Public Awareness Safety Initiative (see "Safety Starts with Us;" page one of the November 2024 Transporter).

Governor Murphy offered his own solution: "And, we are also going to work to enact legislation — introduced by Assemblymembers Lisa Swain, David Bailey, and Heather Simmons — to update our driver education programs to focus on cyclist and pedestrian safety."

Despite driver behavior, the Department is committed to creating a transportation system that protects its most vulnerable users from the worst driving behaviors, and we do this in memory of those who lost their lives on New Jersey's roadways, victims like Nikhil Badlani.

Nikhil was just 11 years old, when his life was taken in a crash. The driver, who caused this fatal crash, failed to stop at the stop sign as Nikhil and his father were traveling through the intersection of Wyoming and Lenox avenues in South Orange.

"Nikhil was a tremendously gifted student, a Boy Scout, and a passionate musician. He should still be here today," Governor Murphy said. "In Nikhil's honor, we must now enact policies that protect our children — and make our transportation system safer and more reliable for everyone."

Nikhil's mother, Sangeeta Badlani, founder of the Nikhil Badlani Foundation and Families for Safe Streets New Jersey, joined Governor Murphy, as an advocate, during his State of the State. Her and her family's advocacy resulted in the passing of Nikhil's Law in 2025. Under this law, New Jersey's Motor Vehicle Commission is required to provide information in the MVC driver's manual on the dangers of breaking the state's traffic laws with instructions on how to sign the "STOP for Nikhil" pledge.

There is a long road ahead of us to achieve a transportation system that is safe for all users, whether they are walking, using an assistive device, riding a bike or scooter, or traveling in a car; but it is a road worth taking and a battle worth fighting.

"We don't try — we triumph. We don't waiver — we win. And we don't settle — we soar," Governor Murphy said. "We're from Jersey, baby!"

Interested in learning more about the project?
Read on the Bergen Record website.

Accessing Your State Employee Savings Benefits

By Lizzy Galamba

Working in the public sector provides a lot of benefits: paid time off for national holidays that most private sector employees don't receive; behind-the-scenes union negotiations for cost-of-living and inflation salary increases; yearly, incremental promotions; student loan forgiveness after 10 years of service; and so much more. But did you know that New Jersey state employees have access to discounts for certain goods and services that aren't available to the public?

As an agency of dedicated public servants, we give a lot to New Jersey through our work, our donations, and our contributions to the New Jersey Charitable Campaign. Now is the time to take advantage of the State Employee Discount Program, an initiative designed to provide unique rebates of up to 25 percent reductions to a broad range of essential products, including health and wellness, technology, travel, education, and home insurance to name a few.

Are you looking to join a gym?
URGE Fitness offers $0 enrollment and processing fees for Term Premium, Family, or Elite memberships, plus 3 free private coaching sessions with the purchase of any membership.

Have your cell phone rates skyrocketed?
Or maybe your personal laptop has taken a turn for the worst? Verizon provides 15 percent off most Voice/Data Plans and 25 percent off individual accessories, and Apple offers two to 10 percent off select products and accessories.

Want to go on a trip or see a concert, but may be tight on funds?
Choice Hotels offers up to 15 percent off, and StubNow provides a 10 percent discount.

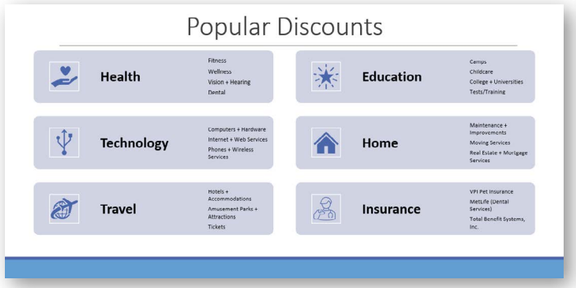
Need a new daycare for your little one?
The Learning Experience offers a 10 percent discount and waived extended care fees.

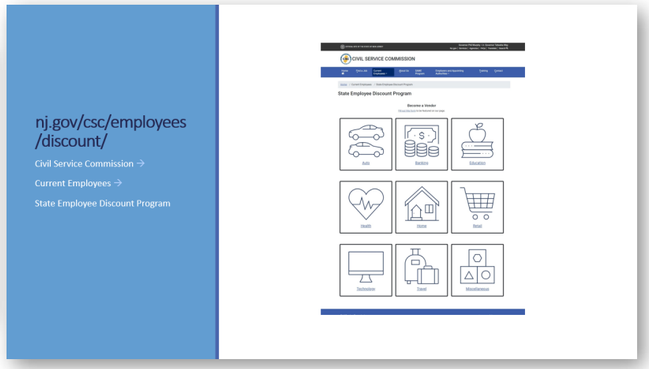
Hoping to spruce up your home this spring?
Enjoy savings on appliances and furniture, maintenance and improvements, moving services, and real estate and mortgage services.

Need insurance for your fuzzy friend?
Receive rebates on pet insurance through Nationwide by using the discount code "State of New Jersey."

Interested in exploring these exclusive savings?
Visit this link: nj.gov/csc/employees/discount/. If you have trouble accessing the link, you can also reach the page by visiting nj.gov/csc and navigating through the menu bar:

Civil Service Commission > Current Employees > State Employee Discount Program.





In otter news… NJDOT Mascot Contest

By Lizzy Galamba

The results are in! It's time to announce the winner of NJDOT's Mascot Contest and introduce NJDOT's newest employee: DOT OTT. Congratulations, Chris Jones, for creating a living piece of NJDOT history!

DOT OTT will be publicly introduced this summer at the Northeast Association of State Transportation Officials Annual Conference, which will be hosted by NJDOT this year. DOT OTT will also make appearances at NJDOT hosted events, both public and internal, as well as at career fairs and other promotional opportunities.

According to TransComm, mascots not only boost employee morale, but also increase customer engagement and make our message of safe, equitable, and reliable transportation memorable. Thank you to everyone who participated in the Mascot Contest, showcasing your creativity and passion for bettering the Department.

Certificates of Participation will be given to each entrant: Scott Ackerman, Eduardo Breda, Scott Crum, Danielle DeLorenzo, Osbel Dorvil, Ariela Ferris, Elizabeth Galamba, Miriana Ghaly, Chris Jones, Mariah Kondash, Jonathan Lahoda, Tommaso Morsella, Shaima Munira, Lucas Ozarowski, Justina Peoples, Troy Spinks, James Stoveken, Gary Stricker, Jeffrey Taylor, Darin Thorn, Clorissa Torres, and James Ward.

NJDOT Pays Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

By Lizzy Galamba

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was a prolific leader whose courage, wisdom and unrelenting demand for justice and peace shifted the course of American History for the better. Although most of his mission led him through the American South, Dr. King's inspiration to join the Civil Rights Movement began right here, in New Jersey.

In 1948, Dr. King enrolled at the Crozer Theological Seminary in Upland, Pennsylvania, where he earned his Bachelors in Divinity in 1951. While studying in Pennsylvania, Dr. King lived at 753 Walnut Street in Camden, and in June 1950, a violent threat against himself and three friends pivoted his views on Civil Rights, making him the leader we know and admire, today.

What some would call one of his first acts of "civil unrest," Dr. King, his friend Walter McCall, and two unnamed women entered Mary's Café in Maple Shade – an establishment known for denying service to Black patrons – for a sit-in protest. They were refused service by the café's owner, who continued to threaten the group by shooting a gun into the air. The house, where Dr. King organized the sit-in and, later, prepared for his first anti-discrimination lawsuit, is currently under renovation and will soon open as a museum, commemorating the activist's first steps in the Freedom Fight. For more information, visit the MLK House Camden website.

In 1965, 15 years following the Mary's Café sit-in, Dr. King returned to New Jersey to receive an Honorary Doctorate of Law from St. Peter's College in Jersey City, delivering a speech on his vision of the American Dream. He later returned to Jersey City on March 27, 1968, addressing a crowd of more than 2,000 people at the African American Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, where he talked about two projects: the Poor People's Campaign march on Washington, D.C. and the Memphis Sanitation Strike. Tragically, just one week later, on April 4, 1968, Dr. King was killed in Memphis, making this Jersey City speech one of his last.

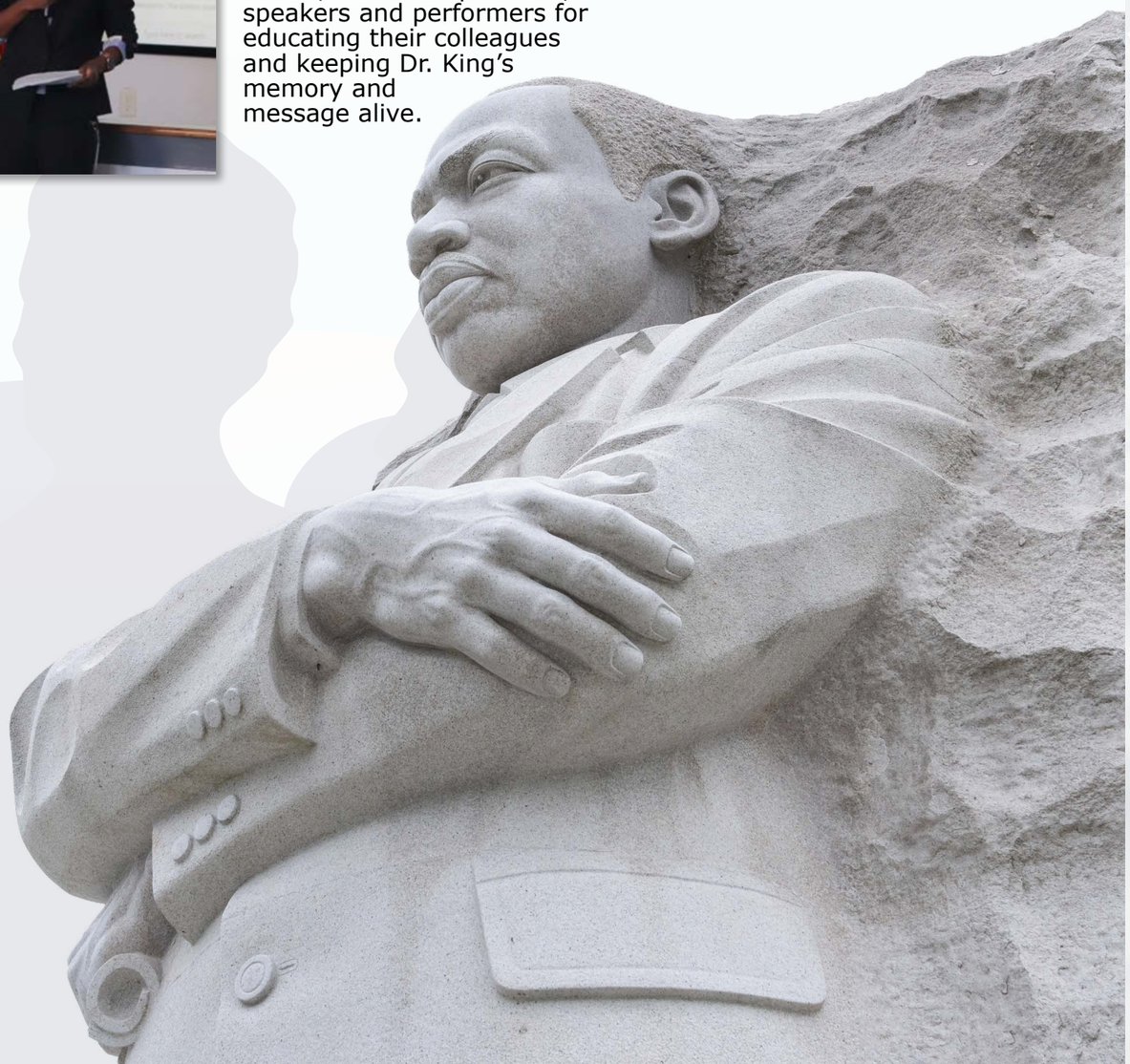
On January 30, 2025, NJDOT celebrated Dr. King's 90th birthday, by paying tribute to his unwavering strength in the face of discrimination, injustice and social unrest through prayer, led by Valerie Brown; an original song, preformed by Onari Williams; and poetry, written by Greg Anthony Jones and presented by Sarah Ekenezar.

"Dr. King's dream wasn't just about what could be achieved in one moment, one march, or one speech. It was about a continuous commitment to justice, equity and peace – every single day. Dr. King said, 'Life's most persistent and urgent question is, "What are you doing for others?"'" Commissioner O'Connor said. "At New Jersey DOT, we answer that question through public service. We don't just build roads and bridges. We build connections … connections that give people access to opportunity and bring communities together. Our work is about ensuring that our roads are accessible and safe to everyone – whether they walk, bike, drive. And making sure everyone can pursue dreams and opportunities without barriers."

Continued on page 10

Reverand Dr. Regena Lynn Thomas, Co-Director of the Human Rights and Community Relations Department at the American Federation of Teachers and former Secretary of State in New Jersey, joined NJDOT as the ceremony's keynote speaker. In her speech, Dr. Thomas honored Dr. King's vision of equality and reiterated the importance of activism.

This event was organized by Niambi McCoy, Rachel Outram, Katie Heiser, Gabriella Zalot, and Patty Green. Many thanks are due to NJDOT's Division of Civil Rights and Affirmative Action, the event planners, speakers and performers for educating their colleagues and keeping Dr. King's memory and message alive.



Black Leaders in Transportation

By Lizzy Galamba & Mariah Kondash

Black History Month is here, and we take this time to recognize the Black and African American inventors and innovators, leaders and pathfinders whose contributions laid the foundation and expectations for the infrastructure system we have today and, more importantly, paved the way for future generations.

Aviation

"Tell them all that as soon as I can walk, I'm going to fly! And my faith in aviation and the usefulness of it will serve in fulfilling the destiny of my people isn't shaken at all." – **Bessie Coleman** said, while recovering from injuries sustained during a plane crash.

You may have heard of the Tuskegee Airmen, the first Black military aviators in the U.S. Army Air Corps, but you may not have heard of the first Black and Native American female aviator, Bessie Coleman.

Inspired by the French women who served as pilots in World War I, Coleman, then working as a manicurist in beauty salons, saw her opportunity to fulfill her mother's dreams for her children "to amount to something." On November 20, 1920, Coleman set sail for France, where there were more opportunity for women and people of color, and she enrolled in France's most famous flight school, the Ecole d'Aviation des Freres Caudron at Le Crotoy in the Somme. After a 10-month course, in 1921 Coleman earned her international pilot's license, becoming the first American woman to obtain a license.

Upon returning to the United States, Coleman became a stunt pilot. Her dream was to own her own plane and start a school for other African American pilots. Tragically, Coleman was killed at the young age of 34, after falling from her plane. Although she was unable to open her school, her spirit lived on in the work of William Powell who established the Bessie Coleman Aero Flying Club and founded the Blackbirds, the first Black female air show team.

Her legacy paved the way for women like Janet Bragg, the first African American woman to earn her Commercial pilot license, and Mae Jemison, the first African American woman in space. Jemison said of Coleman: "I wished I had known her while I was growing up, but then again I think she was there with me all the time."

Maritime

More than 11 million kidnapped Africans were brought to the Americas through the Middle Passage. Many died from violence and disease, while others committed suicide by jumping into the sea, choosing the tragic freedom of death before surrendering themselves to enslavement. Those that survived the passage were met with an even worse fate in America, as they continued to be stripped of their freedom and humanity. However, one Black and Native man, **Captain Paul Cuffe**, mastered the very seas that enslaved and claimed the lives of his ancestors, finding not only his own financial freedom but using this freedom to liberate other Black and Brown Americans.

Born in 1759 on the island of Cuttyhunk, Captain Cuffe first learned to navigate at just 14-years-old on his first ever whaling expedition. Later, during the Revolutionary War (1775-1783), his navigational skills were put to the test, when Captain Cuffe broke British blockades to deliver essential goods to Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard.

Despite facing several difficulties, including a brush with pirates, Captain Cuffe became a respected Master Mariner and whaler, businessman, educator, community advocate, philanthropist, visionary and abolitionist. He was believed to be the wealthiest Black man of his time, as well as the first Black man to meet with a sitting United States President. In 1812, Captain Cuffe met with then-President James Madison to discuss two things: the transatlantic emigration of African Americans back to Africa and the hostilities between the United States and Great Britain, which had created embargos affecting Captain Cuffe's cargo.

The saying "Absolute Power Corrupts Absolutely" didn't apply to Captain Cuffe, who used his power and influence to serve his community and better the lives of Black people in America, working with American and British abolitionists to end American Slavery; founding a free, integrated school in Westport – one of the first of its kind; and leading the "Back to Africa" movement.

Mechanical Engineering

Have you ever heard someone say, "the real McCoy"? This phrase, which still exists in today's language, is believed to originate from the inventions of **Elijah McCoy**. From a young age, McCoy was always fascinated with mechanical devices, often taking them apart and putting them back together, again. Born to escaped slaves, his family's freedom allowed him to attend school in Edinburgh, Scotland, where he became a certified mechanical engineer.

Returning to America in the aftermath of the Civil War, McCoy experienced extreme difficulties, while finding a job, and began working for the Michigan Central Railroad, as a fireman. His job primarily included oiling the trains' axels, bearings and other moving parts while the train was stopped, and shoveling coal into the firebox, fueling the locomotive. It was during this job that McCoy saw a way to improve the functional operation of trains.

In his off hours, McCoy worked in his home-based machine shop to develop a lubricating device that could oil the train while in motion. His search ended in the invention of the automatic lubricator, which could be used on trains and ships, while running, making travel more efficient and profitable. Later called the lubricating cup, or lubricating oil cup, his patent was approved in 1872.

The success of the lubricating cup garnered McCoy's impressive reputation and launched him into professional opportunity not previously awarded to him. By 1882, McCoy was working as a mechanical consultant, establishing his own company: the Elijah McCoy Manufacturing Company, in 1920. Throughout his lifetime, he continued to improve upon the lubricating cup and invented the portable ironing board, a lawn sprinkler and enhanced rubber heels for shoes, filing 57 patents by the end of his life.

Although McCoy died in 1929, his legacy lives on into the 21st century. In 2011, Michigan U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow proposed an amendment to the Patent Reform Act of 2011, which would name the first satellite office of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office after McCoy. The office opened on July 13, 2012.

Professional Engineering

As a young Black woman born and raised in Mississippi, **Lois Cooper** was no stranger to discrimination and societal hardships, but that never stopped her from pursuing and succeeding in her dreams. Upon graduating high school, Cooper pursued a law degree at Tougaloo College, but her path quickly changed, upon dropping out and moving to California to be with her mother. Here, she began studying mathematics at Los Angeles City College, finding her passion in engineering.

Cooper was the first female African American engineer to be hired by the California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) Engineering Department. Breaking the glass ceiling in an industry that is predominately white and male was no easy feat, but Cooper took the challenge in stride, becoming the first Black woman, and only the second woman, in California to earn her Professional Engineering license. On her first try, to say the least.

At a time when bathrooms were still segregated, and calculators and computers were unable to do this kind of work; Cooper's impressive skills in math helped her work her way up from an engineering aid to a transportation engineer and project manager. Not only was her reputation as a mathematician unquestionable, she became a valued resource for her male counterparts.

In a 2005 interview, Cooper said: "To design and build a freeway, you have to calculate the alignment. And everything is based on coordinates, sines and cosines. And so, the world is divided up into this coordinate system…The guys were doing calculations before I got there, and sometimes they'd calculate, and the traverse wouldn't close. So, then you have to go back and figure out where you made a mistake,"

Some notable projects that Cooper engineered include the I-105 Century, San Diego, Long Beach, San Gabriel River and Riverside freeways. Cooper also served as the first female director of the First Diamond Lane, what is now known as the carpool lane, and helped to lead the Caltrans Civil Rights Division, providing job opportunities to minority workers in freeway construction that ran through many low-income communities; but her fight didn't stop there.

In the 1970s, Cooper joined the Los Angeles Council of Black Professional Engineers. Through the program, Cooper visited schools to encourage Black participation in STEM. Until the end of her life, she would teach math and science on Saturdays to hundreds of students.

Railways

At NJDOT, we pride ourselves in creating safe transportation for all roadway users, whether they're driving in a car, walking or biking along the roadway, or using public transportation. The inventions of **Granville T. Woods**, also known as the "Black Edison," laid the foundation for the safe rail and trolley systems we have today.

It started with a device Woods called the "telegraphony." Invented in 1885, users of the telegraphony could switch between voice and Morse code to transmit messages. Two years later, Woods, using existing telecommunications infrastructure running parallel to train tracks, invented the induction telegraph, revolutionizing communication between moving trains and rail stations – communications that were non-existent prior to the creation and deployment of the induction telegraph, which made for extremely dangerous situations and resulted in crashes.

Later, Woods would revolutionize the use of electricity in railway and trolley operations, creating the overhead, electrical conducting system still in use, lessening the reliance on steam-powered engines. He is also inventor of the third rail system, which carries electricity through electromagnetic switches to pull trains along the tracks. This is commonly found in subway systems. Additionally, he improved the automatic air brakes used in rail cars.

Woods' patents were later bought and used by General Electric and the Westinghouse Air Brake Company, but it would be wrong to assume this success came easily to Woods or that he was paid fairly for his contributions, as a Black man living in extremely discriminating times. In fact, many of the inventors of his time, such as Thomas Edison, George Westinghouse and Frank Sprague denied credit to Woods for his inventions. Edison, the man whom Woods was most compared to, claimed rights to Woods' patents and inventions, on at least two documented occasions.

In a lawsuit arguing the patent rights to the multiplex telegraph, Woods defeated Edison. By the end of his life, Woods had invented 15 appliances for electrical railways and received approximately 60 patents.

"Mr. Woods says that he has been frequently refused work because of the previous condition of his race, but he has had great determination and will and never despaired because of disappointments." Reverand William J. Simmons said.

Technology

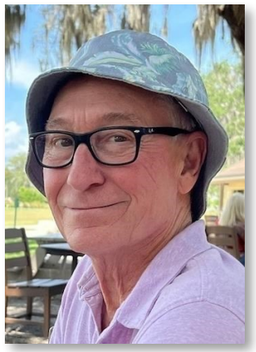
As the first Black man in Cleveland to own a car, the self-proclaimed "Black Edison," **Garrett Morgan**, created the first rudimentary model of the three-light traffic signal we use today.

Born in 1877, Morgan began his career in factories working with and repairing sewing machines. His first patent was for an improved sewing machine, and with this patent, he opened a sewing machine repair shop, a business success that propelled him both personally and professionally. He went on to create a hair straightening cream marketed to African Americans; a "safety hood" breathing device – a precursor to his later invention of the World War I gas mask; and using his mechanical skills, developed a friction drive clutch, which brings us to his 1923 innovation of traffic signals.

After witnessing a carriage accident, Morgan saw a need for a new traffic signal, one that had a warning light, which would alert drivers that they would need to stop. He sold the patent rights to General Electric for $40,000 ($728,257 in today's currency), after looking for buyers in the United States, Canada and England.

This is only a small snapshot of the History of Black Leaders in Transportation, but it is clear that without them, we wouldn't have the public transportation, infrastructure or safety features that have survived the test of time. We thank them not only for their contributions, but for never bowing down in the presence of discrimination. Happy Black History Month!

Obituary



On Tuesday, February 4, 2025, Douglas "Doug" Kopec passed away at his home surrounded by family. He was 65 years old.

Doug began his career with the Department of Transportation in May 2015 as an Engineering Technician 5. Through hard work and dedication, Doug achieved the title of Engineering Technician 3 in February 2024. Doug was a graduate of the College of New Jersey and a lifelong Mercerville resident. Prior to his career with the State of New Jersey, he worked as a draftsman in the private sector.

Known for his cheerful disposition and innovative workstyle, Doug was an instrumental part of the Geodetic and Survey Services unit. After several of the unit's original members had retired and some new technology was introduced, Doug joined the team and helped transform it into the successful version that it is today. Doug also volunteered as an arborist for DOT TOT, the former on-premises childcare center for NJDOT employees. In demonstrating his green thumb, he would often give plants to his friends and coworkers as gifts.

Doug spent as much of his free time as possible down the shore, and even had a home in Holgate, Long Beach Island. He enjoyed the peace and solitude of boating and fishing but also loved attending boat shows and expos with friends. Doug tended to be quiet and reserved, when meeting new people, but was quick to open up and easy to get along with.

He will be deeply missed by his NJDOT colleagues, especially those in the Geodetic Survey Services Unit who had the pleasure of working with him for so many years. He will be remembered for his kind smile and positive attitude.

Son of the late Frank and Christine Stoltz Kopec, Doug is survived by his wife, Maureen; brother, Mark and his fiancée Cindy Ice; and niece, Samantha; as well as many extended relatives and friends.

A Celebration of Life was held on Monday, February 10, 2025, at Hartmann Memorial Home, Mercerville, NJ 08619.

Doug's family asks that, in lieu of flowers, donations in Doug's memory are made to the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

Job and Cyn Ventura February 8, 2025

Rest in peace Doug. You always showed such grace and courage. Montana Ave won't be the same with you gone. Deepest Condolences to Maureen and Mark. Please reach out if there is anything we can do.

john maleski Earlier today

so sorry to hear this about Doug ....i went to ND with him and then later at trenton st. collage...great guy...will miss seeing him at the gym on weeknights...god blesss ...john maleski

Service Milestones

45 Years of Service

Eugene K. Raisley

35Years of Service

Robert J. Abitz
Lisa A. Laggy

25 Years of Service

Scott Haley
Daniel S. Hendershot
Kujtim Ismailovski
Michael R. Marigliano
Moises Martinez
Stephanie Nock
Charles F. Szentner
Richard J. Taylor

Employee Retirements January 2025

45 Years of Service
John Patricco

40 Years of Service
Larry Cotton

39 Years of Service
David Tyrpak

38 Years of Service
Kavita Kaushal
David Sprague

37 Years of Service
Antoun Abraham

36 Years of Service
Crystal Mercer
Arthur Sarnese
Richard Thayer

33 Years of Service
William Gaus
Meredith Hammond
Kunal Kaushal

25 Years of Service
Gerard Carroll
Robert Klinger
Michael Large
Stefanie Potapa
Pankajkumar Shah

21 Years of Service
Eriverto Maldonaldo

19 Years of Service
Dwayne McMillan

18 Years of Service
Morris Gould

16 Years of Service
Billy Brown

Announcements

Correction: NJDOT Mixed Bowling League

Description: Description: For $20.00 a week, you can play three games on a three-person mixed team (all-gendered). Space is available for whole teams, but individuals are also welcome to join, both full-time and part-time. A banquet is also held at the end of the season!

Meetings: Games are played once a week on Tuesdays, between September and mid-April (32-week season).

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Location: Slocum's Bowling Center: 1675 Pennington Road (Route 31), Ewing, NJ 08618

Contact: GregoryW.Harbach@dot.nj.gov, Phone: 609-963-1158 or cinworr7@aol.com

Correction: Toastmasters Club

Description: The NJDOT Toastmasters Club provides its members with the opportunity to develop and improve their public speaking, communication and leadership skills in a safe comfortable environment.

Meetings: Meetings are held on the first Wednesday, third Thursday, and fifth Wednesday of every month.

Time: 12:15 p.m. to 12:45 p.m.

Location: Hybrid Meetings; Training Room A, E&O 2nd Floor or on Microsoft Teams. Location can vary due to operational needs.

Contact: DOT-Toastmasters.Club@dot.nj.gov

Mark Your Calendars!

Professional Engineering and Design Experience (PEDE) Graduation Ceremony

When:
Feb. 21 from 11:00am to 12:30pm

Where:
NJDOT Ewing HQ, Multi-Purpose Room

NJDOT's Women's History Month Celebration

When:
Mar. 31 at 12 Noon

Where:
NJDOT Ewing HQ, Multi-Purpose Room

NJDOT's 37th Annual Black Histroy Month Celebration

When:
Feb. 27 at 12 Noon

Where:
NJDOT Ewing HQ, Multi-Purpose Room

National Take Your Child to Work Day

When:
April 24